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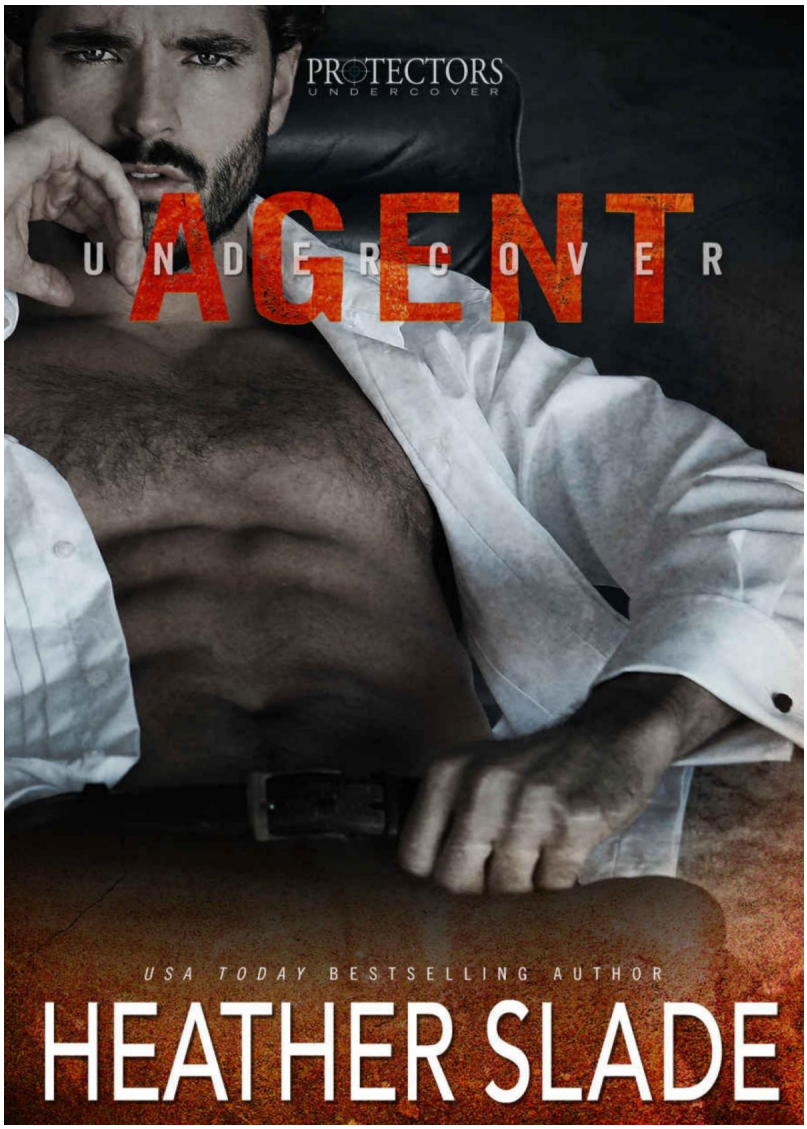

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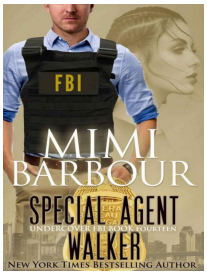

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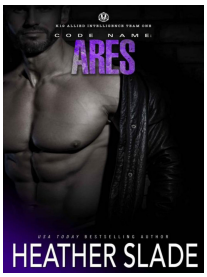

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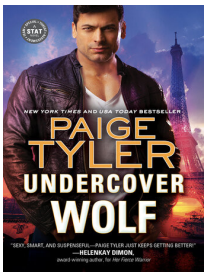

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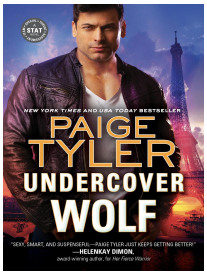

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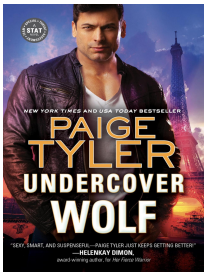

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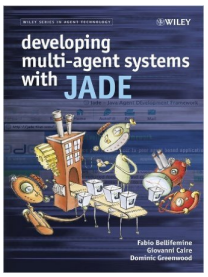

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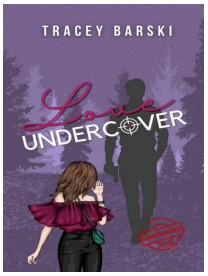

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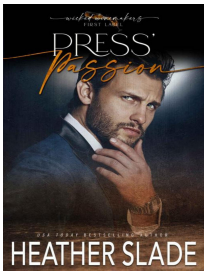

PROTECTORS
UNDERCOVER
UNDERCOVER AGENT
USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
HEATHER SLADE

UNDERCOVER AGENT

HEATHER SLADE

Undercover Agent

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CONTENTS

Undercover Agent
1. Emerson
2. Lynx
3. Emerson
4. Emerson
5. Lynx
6. Emerson
7. Lynx
8. Emerson
9. Lynx
10. Emerson
11. Lynx
12. Emerson
13. Lynx
14. Emerson
15. Lynx
16. Emerson
17. Lynx
18. Emerson
19. Lynx
20. Emerson
21. Lynx
22. Emerson
23. Lynx
24. Emerson
25. Lynx
26. Emerson
27. Lynx
28. Emerson
29. Lynx
30. Emerson
31. Lynx
32. Emerson
33. Lynx
34. Emerson
35. Lynx
36. Emerson
Epilogue
Undercover Savior

About the Author
Also by Heather Slade

UNDERCOVER AGENT

He's an undercover MI6 agent looking for a lost teammate.
She's an American doctor who's uncovered a potentially deadly secret.
Together, can they save the world from an enemy out to destroy both of their countries?

LYNX

It was one night. A night of pure passion and desire. A night I will never forget. But she walked out, and I never stopped thinking about her. Now, she's back. Within my reach. And again, she's off-limits. She belongs to someone else. One of my men. Teaming up with her to take down those who threaten our freedoms seems like a perfect way to get close to her. But there's more at stake than ever before.

EMERSON

I never forgot him. He was—is—unlike any other man I'd ever known. But the timing was off; I had more happening in my life than I could handle. Now, with him right here, I can feel how much I've missed: His touch, his scent, his taste. Except, there's more on the line than a love affair. We have to keep it professional. But can I do that when I need so much more from this undercover agent?

1

EMERSON

There was something about a man with a British accent that melted my panties. That it was a hundred degrees with the same amount of humidity, melted the rest of me. The Englishman who said good morning and held the door open as I walked out of my air-conditioned building and he walked in, didn't seem affected by the scorching temps in the slightest.

"Can I help you find something?" I asked when I saw the man stop at the bank of mailboxes. Maybe letting a stranger saunter into the building just because of his nothing-to-do-with-the-weather hotness hadn't been the smartest thing to do.

"I'm a friend of Niven's," he said, not looking at me but peering through the tiny window of the jam-packed box instead.

"Oh, Tommy? Of course, that makes sense."

He turned to me and cocked his head, but immediately focused his attention back on the mailbox.

"I haven't seen him for several days." Hence the overflowing mail. It wasn't unusual, though. The man who lived at the opposite end of the hall from me was out of town more than he was in. The part that made sense was that Tommy, as I called him, was British too. "Was he expecting you?" I asked as if it were any of my business. Anything, though, to have a reason to keep staring at the man who reminded me of Pierce Brosnan's James Bond—the *Golden Eye* version.

My penchant for movies made the same year I was born or earlier, meant that most of the men who turned my head on screen were now in their sixties or seventies. The dark-haired hottie in front of me, the one I was admiring from head to foot—the same man who was speaking to me—was closer to my own age. *The man who was speaking to me.*

"I'm sorry, can you please repeat that?" I asked while, at the same time, trying to figure out why he looked so familiar—the sunglasses and baseball cap he wore didn't make it easy.

"I said I wasn't certain of my date of arrival."

As much as I didn't want to take my eyes off Mister 007, I glanced at my phone. "Oh! I need to go!" I exclaimed, dismayed to see that if I didn't leave now, I wouldn't have a prayer of arriving at work in time for my nine o'clock meeting. "Sorry. Maybe I'll see you around."

The man nodded, but didn't appear to have heard me; James Bond would never have been so rude.

Hoisting one of the three canvas bags I was carrying onto my shoulder, I rushed out of the building just in time to see the number one bus pull away from my corner stop. "Dammit," I muttered under my breath. What would've taken me twelve minutes would now be forty-two; the next bus wouldn't come for a half hour.

I turned at the exact, right moment to see the man formerly—albeit momentarily—known as my own British superspy leave the building and walk in the opposite direction. I leaned against the lamppost, inwardly swooning at the way his steel-hard ass looked in his trousers, as Tommy would call them. His shoulders were ridiculously broad, and even though he wore a long-sleeve dress shirt, I could see his muscular arms as he moved. *But that ass.* I could barely bring myself to look away.

Tommy. When had I last seen him? It had to have been at least two weeks. I crossed my fingers that the other Brit's arrival meant he was back in town. Things ended so awkwardly between us the last time I saw him, and before I had the chance to talk to him about it, he was gone again.

I touched my lips with my fingers, remembering the kiss he and I had shared that night. It had been so unexpected. We'd gone out for dinner several times, but until that moment, it hadn't occurred to me that Tommy was interested in me. Maybe it was just that I was so out of practice, I missed the signs.

I sighed. My dating slump had lasted longer than I cared to acknowledge even to myself. I was a self-proclaimed nerd, burying myself in global-political grand strategy to the point of exclusion of everything else in my life. Dating—who had the time? Fashion—why bother when the only people who ever saw me were other analysts who also had their noses buried in foreign-policy documents?

My last long-term boyfriend had been a professor, also in the international program, but on the Russian side. We broke up the day I walked into his office to find his associate on her back on his desk, legs spread, skirt around her waist, and panties on the floor, beside him.

It had definitely put me off Eastern European men, but Brits? They were my weakness. Ever since the one night when I decided to act the role of someone far different than who I usually am—someone adventurous, worldly, passionate, and wanton.

I shook my head against the memory. Thinking about the best sex I'd ever had wouldn't help the ache of not having any in so long get better.

I set my bags down on the sidewalk and rolled my shoulders. I had a long day ahead of me, and starting out thirty minutes late wasn't going to make it any shorter.

I checked the time on my phone again, and given it hadn't stood still for me, I contemplated whether it would be better to call a car service and be on time, or my assistant, Paxon Warrick, to tell him I'd be late for the third time this week. Since it was only Wednesday, the car service was probably the best bet, especially considering we had an important meeting scheduled in forty-five minutes.

"Everything okay?" said an English-accented voice from behind me. When I spun around and looked into my friend's friend's green eyes, he was elevated right back to superspy status.

Oh my God—those green eyes. I'd never forget them. It had been three years since I last saw them and the man standing in front of me. I wanted to look him up and down, but I wasn't wearing sunglasses to hide my once-over. *Keep your eyes up here*, I told myself, focusing on his face.

"I missed my bus. Do you wear contacts?"

He shook his head, cocking it to the side like he had when I mentioned Tommy. "What an odd question."

"Your eyes. They're the color of sage after it rains. Not grayish like Dusty Miller."

Now he looked perplexed. "Who is Dusty Miller?"

"Not who. What. It's a plant."

If anything, my explanation left him looking more puzzled. The fact that we were in the midst of our second conversation and he showed no sign of recognizing me, didn't come as a surprise. I looked nothing like I had that night.

Gone were the sophisticated clothes I'd purchased for my first-ever international policy conference in London and then never wore again. In their place, I had on a sensible, wrinkle-resistant black pantsuit, a short-sleeve white blouse, and comfortable black pumps with a one-inch heel. Instead of the contacts I'd had in when I last saw this man, I was wearing my round, tortoise-shell glasses that caused less eyestrain when I spent hours upon hours reading. And, like most days, my hair was bone straight instead of falling down my back in soft waves as it had that night.

The other thing—while the man in front of me had been my sole indiscretion, the only one-night stand I'd had in my life, there was no doubt that I was one of countless for him.

A car pulled up at the curb beside us. "Can I give you a lift somewhere?"

Could I sit in such close proximity to him when he had no recollection of how he'd rocked my world one night three years ago? "No, I'll just wait for the next bus, but thank you."

He studied me as though that response confused him as much as my referring to his eyes as the color of a plant. "Where are you going?"

"MIT." I pointed down Mass Ave. "You know, in Cambridge."

"I do know. I'm going there myself."

"Really?"

"I'd hardly lie about it."

I looked at the time on my phone again. It was speeding by, and I was going to be late if I didn't accept his offer of a ride, and that would be even if I called for my own car service.

"If you're sure it wouldn't be an imposition."

"It wouldn't."

His voice, the one that had played over and over again in my head in the months that followed our sexcapades, didn't sound anything like what I remembered. Instead of being suave and sexy, he was clipped and curt. I remembered him being cocky, not rude.

He opened the door and picked up all three of my bags, motioning for me to get in. Before I could scoot to the far side of the back-passenger seat, he closed the door and walked around to the other side.

"Sir," the man behind the wheel said when my Mister One-Nighter got in. Before my backseat companion could tell him where we were going, the driver sped off.

On the best of days, like Sundays at four in the morning, it took me seven minutes to get from my apartment to my office. Today I'd be there in under five at the rate the man otherwise employed as a Nascar driver was going. The last time I'd felt this carsick was on Mister Toad's Wild Ride at Disneyland.

"You can drop me at this corner," I said when the driver pulled up at the intersection of Memorial and Wadsworth. "Thank you for the ride." I realized then that he hadn't introduced himself, and neither had I. However, I had been preoccupied with me remembering him and him not remembering me—along with not hurling my breakfast on the floor of the car.

I turned to shake his hand and thank him properly, but he'd already climbed out the other side of the car and was holding my three bags.

"I'm Emme," I said when he opened my door and I got out of the car.

"Lennox," he answered.

Hmm. Lennox? Not Lynx as he'd introduced himself that night? *Interesting*.

"Shall we?" he asked so abruptly that it pushed my annoyance over the edge.

"It was nice to meet you, although you look very familiar to me. Like maybe we've met before." I gave him time to acknowledge having the same recollection I had. When he didn't, I prompted him further. "Do I look at all familiar to you?"

Still no response. Wait. What was he doing? When I turned around, I caught him looking at himself in the window of my building. How could he possibly remember me when he was so busy admiring his own reflection?

God, what did I expect? Hadn't I just reminded myself that I was probably only one on a miles-and-miles-long list of one-night conquests for the man I'd met in a hotel bar? I should be happy he didn't recognize me.

When I walked away, he followed, reminding me he still had my bags. "This is my building." I held out my hands, which he ignored.

"Mine as well."

"Oh…um…which department?"

"International Policy. I have a meeting with Dr. Charles."

I stopped walking and groaned inwardly. "You're kidding."

His perplexed expression reappeared. "I'm not," he said with a furrowed brow.

"I'm Dr. Charles."

2

LYNX

The lovely creature standing in front of me, the one with big ocean-blue eyes and hair the color of my favorite tawny port, the one I'd recognized the moment I saw her, the one I couldn't walk away from this morning even though I should have…was the woman Saint referred to as Charlie?

Based on his description of her, I'd expected *Charlie* to be someone older, not closer to his age and mine.

I hadn't recognized her in the photographs in her dossier; they certainly hadn't done her remote justice. I had, though, the minute she passed me by when I entered Saint's building. I had no reason to, but I'd hovered at the mailboxes earlier just so my gaze on her could linger.

As she studied something on her mobile, I studied her. It had been three years since I last saw Emerson. At the time, she hadn't referred to herself as Emme, and I hadn't known her last name.

I didn't remember her being as thin as she was. She looked like a runner based on the leanness of her arms and legs. I also didn't recall her tits being smaller than average, but that didn't stop them from registering with my cock.

She raised her head, scrunching her eyes. "My meeting is with Adam Benjamin. You are not Dr. Benjamin."

"He had a last-minute emergency. I'm here on his behalf."

"Oh. That's odd. How do you know Tommy?"

I smiled at the way she jumped between topics in a single sentence. "That's the second time you referred to 'Tommy.' Are you speaking of Niven St. Thomas?"

"Right. Sorry. I call him Tommy; he calls me Charlie."

I shook my head. Saint hadn't mentioned her nickname for him; only his for her. The other thing Saint had told me, which now made my blood pressure skyrocket, was that he and Dr. Charles had been seeing one another. The wanker was the epitome of a womanizing rake. I'd never known Saint to spend more than a single night with any one woman. Not that I'd spent more than that single night with this one either.

She slid her mobile into her handbag and rested one hand on her hip. "Are you aware that Dr. Benjamin and I were meeting about…" she leaned in closer and looked left and right. "China?"

I repeated her motions. "Yes. I am."

"How did you say you know Tom—Mr. St. Thomas?"

Still leaning close to her, I breathed in her scent. The memory of the one night we spent together roared through my mind. I wasn't typically a fan of perfume of any kind, but I remembered hers being enticing.

"I didn't," I murmured, closing my eyes to sort the different fragrances in my head. She smelled of bergamot orange, morning jasmine, and evening rose petals, with a hint of vanilla and patchouli mixed in. Its potency made my eyes roll back in my head and my mouth water as I recalled running my tongue over her body, tasting her skin.

When I reopened my eyes, Dr. Charles appeared transfixed. She still stood as close, but her head was angled away from me.

"Are you *smelling* me?" she asked.

Caught, I smiled. "Your perfume is beguiling," I said without apology.

"I don't wear perfume," she responded, grabbing my arm with the hand previously on her hip and leading me to the building's entrance. She swiped a card in the slot by the door and then rested her palm on the dark-gray square beneath it. "Sorry, protocol," she said, slipping inside the door and closing it behind her.

I was well aware of the security measures in place at MIT. Given the nature of the work done within this building's walls, security was as tight here as it was at Vauxhall Cross. After repeating the same security process she had completed, I joined her inside.

"I admit to being intrigued by your association with my friend, I mean neighbor." She squared her shoulders. "My neighbor friend, Mister…"

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Flustered, Emerson's cheeks turned the most delightful shade of pink.

"Please call me Lennox."

She closed one eye and pointed her index finger at me with her thumb raised, mimicking a gun, and then brought her hand forward and poked my upper arm. "Again, you dodged my question." She walked into the lift as though she didn't anticipate I would follow.

When we exited on the eighth floor, a man I knew but had to pretend I didn't, was waiting.

"Good morning, Emme," he said before turning to me. "This must be Mr. Edgemon. I'm Paxon Warrick." He held out his hand, and I shook it.

"Emerson," I murmured, loving that name so much more than the nickname the man known to me as Irish had just used.

"Yes?" she asked with wide eyes and a furrowed brow.

"Do you need a few moments before our meeting?"

"Um…sure," she answered. "How did you know my…never mind. I'm sure it was in Dr. Benjamin's notes."

I nodded, waiting to see if my slip let on I'd recognized her like I guessed she had me.

"I'll show our guest to the conference room," Irish offered.

"Wait. Were you aware we were meeting with Mr. Edgemon instead of Dr. Benjamin?"

"I was."

As I watched her face go from puzzled to pensive, I wondered why Irish wasn't handling this better.

"I received an email. I assumed you did too," he said, but it seemed too little, too late.

"Hmm," she murmured, picking up her bags. "I'll just be a moment." She walked away, leaving me alone with the undercover agent the CIA had put in place when MI6 brought Saint in.

"Follow me," he said when she disappeared down the hallway. "Coffee? No, wait. You're a tea drinker."

"Neither, thanks. Water would be nice, though."

Irish led me into what looked like more of a war room than a place to meet. "I'll forewarn you that Emme—Dr. Charles—can be…quirky, and that's an understatement. But she's a brilliant analyst."

"As well as strategist." And so much more than that. She was the woman I'd never been able to forget, and the one I never thought I'd see again.

Irish murmured his agreement, grabbed an envelope from the other side of the table, and slid it in front of me. "Beautiful too."

Him saying so set me on edge, just like it had remembering that Saint told me they'd been seeing each other. "How close are the two of you?"

"Not as close as I'd like, but after this mission is over, who knows?"

My jaw tightened. Not if I had anything to say about it. And I planned to. Irish was out of his league. Way out. If I wanted Emerson—and I did—I'd have her. He and Saint could both be damned.

"She hasn't let on that she knows anything about Saint's disappearance," he said quietly when he returned with my glass of water. "Or Dr. Benjamin's," he added as an afterthought.

"That was evident."

"How so?"

"We crossed paths at their apartment building."

"What did she say?"

I explained that I'd encountered *Emme* exiting Saint's building earlier as I was going in. "There wasn't anything specific, only that her demeanor when I mentioned knowing Niven was one of curiosity rather than concern."

"Serendipitous, meeting her," he commented.

"Or not." I would've preferred to keep my association with Saint a secret longer than I had.

"Have a seat." Irish motioned to a chair.

"I'll wait for Dr. Charles. In fact, I'd prefer to meet with her alone."

"Why?"

I was beginning to think a talk with Irish's boss was in order. In the hierarchy of either of our agencies, I was several ranks above the man. I raised a brow.

"She expects me to be in the meeting."

"I'm sure you'll think of something."

He appeared annoyed, but that wasn't my problem.

"Let me know when you'd like to debrief," he said before he walked out of the room.

A few minutes later, Emerson joined me. "I apologize about Mr. Warrick…Paxon…my assistant. Apparently, he had another appointment."

"As he mentioned."

“Oh. Huh. Well…shall we get started?” she asked without preamble of further small talk, which I found surprisingly disappointing. I usually abhorred mindless chatter, but in this case, I wanted to hear more of the beautiful lilt to her voice.

Her scent wafted in the air, and the desirability the woman exuded made my ability to keep my head on business nearly impossible. I adjusted my trousers and took a seat where she indicated I should.

“After his last visit, Dr. Benjamin sent over key points he wanted to cover when he returned.” As she reached around me to pick up the envelope that Irish had slid my way, her elbow knocked over the glass of water, the entirety of its contents emptying all over my lap. Simultaneously, the papers contained in the envelope spilled out and scattered on the floor at my feet.

“Oh, dear, I’m such a klutz,” she mumbled, dropping to her knees in front of me to clean up the mess before I could stand to do the same. As it was, she was between my legs, head slightly bowed.

Without stepping over her, I was powerless to do anything to help. “Emerson?”

“Yes?” When she looked up, it was obvious she realized where, exactly, her head was in correlation to my cock. Her cheeks flushed, and she tried to scoot away, only to bang into the chair behind her. When she grasped it in an attempt to stand and it slid away, I watched as her head smacked into the table before I could prevent it from happening.

“Fuck, that hurt,” she muttered, pushing the offending chair back, landing on her bottom, and rubbing her head.

I stood and held my hand out to help her do the same. When she grasped it with hers, we both noticed blood on her fingers.

“Stay where you are and let me take a look.”

“That’s okay, I can—”

“I said, stay where you are.” Putting my hand on her shoulder, I held her in place; I could see dark red blood seeping into her lighter red hair. “You’ve got a laceration. Stitches will likely be necessary.”

“I’ll be fine,” she snapped, swatting my hand away. “And you’re kind of bossy.” Refusing to look me in the eye, she grabbed the offending table’s edge and pulled herself up.

“Take this and press it to your scalp,” I told her, placing my handkerchief in her palm and then guiding her hand to where she was bleeding.

I saw her start to sway and caught her before she toppled over. She was facing me, her free hand on my arm.

I told myself I was looking into her eyes for signs of a concussion, but the truth was, I was mesmerized by the swirling shades of ocean blue. Her pupils were dilated, but when my gaze drifted lower, the hardened nipples I could see through her thin blouse indicated her visceral reaction was more likely caused by our close proximity than the bump on her head. My cock was certainly reacting in a way I had little control of.

Was she remembering the same thing I was? How we’d spent one night having the best sex I’d had in my life? And that was saying something. While the pretty redhead wasn’t the most experienced lover I’d ever been with, there was something about her, about the way our bodies came together, like two perfect circles entwined, that I’d never been able to forget.

“You can let go now,” she murmured, taking her hand off my arm.

Reluctantly, I did as she asked, and she took a step toward the door.

“Where are you going?”

“Um, my office. I have some…first aid supplies.”

“I’ll go with you.” I held my arm out, but she didn’t take it, so instead, I kept my hand on the small of her back.

She peeked over her shoulder. “I’m fine,” she repeated.

I wasn’t certain she would be once she saw the amount of blood that had seeped into her hair and my handkerchief. Head wounds tended to bleed a lot, but at the rate hers was, she had no choice but to see a physician to get it closed up.

“Wait here,” I said, eyeing a roll of paper towels on the counter in what looked like a small kitchen. Grabbing a few in one hand, I gently removed the blood-soaked cloth and then folded another few into a square. I took her right hand and brought it up to hold it in place. “You really need to see a physician,” I said again.

“Right,” she murmured, continuing down the hallway into an office that I would have immediately known was hers, even without her in it. I couldn’t pinpoint exactly why; it was just a feeling I got when I crossed the threshold.

“Sorry for the mess, I’m…reorganizing,” she muttered as she opened a desk drawer and pointed to a large red case with a white cross on the top. “Could you please help me with this?”

“Of course.” The box looked big enough to supply a mobile critical care unit and as though it weighed a metric ton. I hoisted it onto the desk. “Are you the paramedic on staff for all of MIT?”

Ignoring my remark, she opened the lid and rummaged through the contents. Evidently, the first aid kit was also slated for reorganization.

“Here it is,” she said, pulling a smaller box from the case. “Would you mind?” she asked, handing it to me.

I stared at her, incredulous. “What am I doing with that?”

Emerson pulled out a small vial and stopper. “It’s a liquid bandage. It should work fine.”

“Are you suggesting that I put this on your laceration as opposed to seeking medical attention?”

“Never mind,” she said, grabbing the items from my hand and stalking out of her office. Once again, I was on her heels.

“You can either wait in my office, or we can reschedule for another time,” she said when she realized I was behind her.

“No,” I said at the same time Irish walked into the lobby from the other direction.

“What happened?” He gasped with a horrified expression when he saw the bloody towels Emerson held to her head. Then, his gaze landed on my drenched trousers.

“A little accident. I spilled water, and then things just got…worse,” she said, trying to get around him.

When he grabbed her arm and led her over to a chair in the lobby, it was all I could do not to throttle him.

“Sit there and don’t move,” he barked and then turned to me. “She has a first aid kit in her office.”

“Yes,” I said, pointing to the vial of liquid she held tight in her hand.

“What’s that?” he asked, looking from me to her.

“It’s a liquid bandage. If you’d just put some on my cut, it will stop the bleeding.”

“Is she kidding?”

“I’m afraid she’s somewhat intransigent.” While my irritation with the undercover agent posing as her assistant was reaching an epic proportion, I found Emerson’s stubbornness absolutely adorable.

“Let me have a look.” Irish moved her hand and lifted the sopping paper towels. “It’s bleeding a lot and looks to be about five centimeters. I’m sorry, Emme, but you’re going to have to go to the emergency room.”

“No!” she shrieked, startling us both. “No hospitals.”

I nudged Irish out of the way and knelt in front of her. I put my hand on her knee, but what I really wanted to do was scoop her into my arms.

“The laceration is this long,” I said, holding my thumb and index finger apart. “Your desired treatment won’t stop the bleeding. You need to see a doctor.”

Emerson’s eyes bored into mine as though she was pleading with me to understand, and I did, or at least, I thought I did. It wasn’t about seeing a doctor; there was something about going to a hospital that set her off.

“Medical services is closed until two,” Irish said, looking at his watch. “What about Cambridge Urgent Care?”

Emerson’s eyes opened wide like they had when he mentioned the emergency room.

“I’ve another idea. Give me a moment?”

She nodded.

I stepped several paces away, pulled out my mobile, and sent a text. Moments later, the device rang.

“Lennox, how are you? Have you arrived in Boston?”

“I’m well, Stephen, thanks. I’m in Cambridge.”

“As am I. I’m attending a conference at MIT.” I knew he was. “We’re on a break presently.”

“How much longer is your break?”

“Let’s see…another fifteen minutes.”

“Where are you specifically?”

“Building 14—”

“One moment,” I said to Stephen. “Emerson, where is building 14?”

Irish answered for her, pointing. “Right behind that building there.”

“Is it where the medical services are located?”

“Yes, but—”

I held up my hand and raised the mobile to my ear. “Wait there. I need you to take a look at a head injury.”

3

EMERSON

"What's going on?" I asked when *Lennox* put his phone in his pocket and walked back over to where Paxon held a fresh set of paper towels against my head.

He knelt in front of me like he had a few minutes earlier, and my heart rate increased tenfold—as it had right after I humiliated myself by spilling water on him. I studied him studying me. How was it possible that he didn't recognize me after staring into my eyes like he was?

"My cousin Stephen is a physician, who happens to be here at MIT for a medical conference. Will you allow him to take a look at your cut?"

I was almost disappointed that he didn't say laceration again. It flowed so smoothly off his English-accented tongue in that swoon-worthy James Bondy way. This was the voice I remembered, not the one he'd used earlier that made me feel like a forgettable nuisance.

"Yes," I said when I realized he was waiting for an answer.

"Will you be okay?" Paxon squeezed my shoulder.

"I'll be with her," Lynx snapped at him.

"Right. Well, I'll be in the office later if you need anything."

"I need to get my purse…and my phone." I rushed away from the two men in the lobby, who oddly, appeared as though they were about to come to blows, and went to my office to grab my things. When I looked up from my desk, Lynx stood in the doorway, just as handsome as I remembered.

He had to be well over six feet, with hair so dark it almost looked black. His green eyes were piercing as they stared into mine. I let my gaze drift down the length of him. He wore a pale blue dress shirt with black trousers and brown wingtips. The way his clothes fit his body, I doubted he was any less fit than he had been three years ago. Even without closing my eyes—which I refused to allow myself to do—I could feel his powerful arms around me and the way his steely pecs and abs felt when I ran my hands over them.

"Ahem." Did his lip twitch right before he cleared his throat, startling me out of admiring him? "Ready?" he asked, with a full smirk now on display.

I nodded and swept past him, beyond irritated that he saw me doing what so many other women obviously did.

He caught up and kept his hand on the small of my back as he led me over to the elevator. His fingertips alone sent an electrical current straight through my body. When it settled between my legs, I shuddered.

The door to the elevator opened, and I couldn't say whether I was relieved or troubled that it was empty. Standing less than a foot from me was the only man I'd ever let myself get so carried away with that it didn't matter we'd just met in the bar of the hotel where my conference was being held. My attraction to him was immediate, then and now. Our bodies spoke to one another that night as though we were already lovers. That he had no recollection of me, nearly broke my heart.

The elevator dinged again, and we stepped out into the lobby. Before we exited the building, he took my hand in his. What I should find comforting, only increased my irritation.

"This way," I said when we walked past the building across from mine. As we rounded the corner, a man standing in front of the medical services building raised his hand; Lynx did the same.

"What happened to you?" the man smirked and asked when we got closer.

"Spilled-water incident, which resulted in Dr. Charles hitting her head quite hard."

"Come with me. I made arrangements for someone to open the clinic," the man said.

He was as gorgeous and captivating as Lynx, but in an entirely different way. Where Lynx was a high-handed, arrogant, no-nonsense know-it-all, his cousin…doctor…doctor-cousin…had a glint in his eye that gave me the impression that under different circumstances, he might be a mischievous tease.

We followed him inside, past the unmanned check-in desk, and into an exam room. "Let's have a look, shall we?"

I let go of the paper towels that I was holding against the cut. As soon as I did, Lynx took them and threw them in the waste can; the other man donned gloves.

"I'm Stephen," he said as he parted my hair and took a look. "I'm Lennox's cousin as well as a doctor."

"Emerson," I said, cringing when his fingers touched my scalp. "Nice to meet you."

"You don't have to fib. You won't hurt my feelings considering I'm hurting you far more. I should've asked before, but any allergies? To latex, for example?"

"No. None."

"Good. I wouldn't want you breaking out in a wretched rash on top of bleeding profusely from the nasty gash in your head." He winked and leaned closer to me. "Tell me, did my evil cousin do this to you? I seem to remember an incident where Lennox convinced me to get on our grandfather's Penny-farthing, which I promptly fell from. That was a right mess." The entire time he chattered, he pressed a gauze pad filled with antiseptic on and around the cut.

"I did nothing of the kind."

As opposed to Lynx's scowl, Stephen's smile was infectious. He tossed the gauze into the garbage, took off his gloves, and turned around to face me. "The laceration on your scalp is ghastly, but I assure you, you won't bleed to death. I do need to close it up."

"Okay," I murmured when he appeared to be waiting for an answer from me.

"Be right back," he said to me and then turned to Lynx. "Try not to do anything to further injure my patient in my absence."

Lynx rolled his eyes and stood in front of me when we were alone.

"How are you feeling?"

"Embarrassed."

He smiled. "Are you dizzy? Feeling nauseous?"

I was, but I doubted either had to do with me cutting my head. He made me dizzy—lust-filled vertigo. And the nausea? That related to how humiliated I was both by my over-the-top clumsiness and the fact he had no recollection that we spent an entire night naked in one another's arms.

"Have you had staples before?" Stephen asked when he returned.

"No, but they sound painful."

"I won't lie. They are. But for a scalp wound, they're the best option, given how thick the skin is. I'd offer to numb the area first, but to be honest, the lidocaine hurts worse than the staples do." He motioned to Lynx, who took my hand.

"Here we go," said Stephen. "Try not to move."

"Ouch!" I shouted, but by the time I did, he was finished.

"All set. Those will stay in for a few days, and then they'll need to be removed by a doctor." Stephen looked down at where Lynx still had a firm hold on my hand and then back up at me. I tried to get him to let go, which only resulted in him holding on tighter.

"You may be mildly concussed. Do you have someone to look after you?"

"I will," Lynx announced.

My head snapped in his direction. "That won't be necessary. I can—"

"What needs to be done?" he asked Stephen as though I hadn't said a word. I wrenched my hand from his, intending to protest, but Stephen had already handed Lynx my care instructions and the two were reviewing them.

"Keep an eye for any signs of nausea, dizziness, fever, or if she loses consciousness, bring her here or to an emergency room. Also," he said, looking at me, "you'll likely soon have a dickens of a headache. While at first you may suppose it's from my cousin's incessant chatter, as hard as it might be to believe, it'll be caused more by your injury. Please forgive me in advance for what I'm about to say, but you shouldn't be left alone for the next twenty-four hours."

His smirk made me smile.

He turned back to Lynx, who I caught rolling his eyes for the second time. I could imagine these two as young boys. Stephen forever the tease. Lynx spoiling his fun.

The reality of what he'd said, suddenly dawned on me. There was no way I could spend another minute with Lynx, let alone hours. "My parents live in the city. I'll just go to their place."

"What else?" Lynx asked, not acknowledging I'd said a word.

"She needs to rest and avoid caffeine and alcohol. No screen time, and that includes a computer, telly, smart phone, or tablet of any kind. No bright lights or loud noises, and no demanding physical activities." He said the last part directly to me, with a wink.

"What about for the headache?" Lynx asked.

Did he not remember I was still in the room and that even if I did have a concussion, which I doubted, I could see and hear perfectly fine?

"I can prescribe a pain reliever—"

"That won't be necessary," I said, loud enough that both of them turned and looked at me. "Why do doctors insist on

prescribing narcotics when an over-the-counter pain reliever would work just fine?"

"Understood," said Stephen. "Any issue with acetaminophen?"

I shook my head, feeling like a bitch for snapping at him the way I had. The man was doing me a favor, after all. Perhaps sensing it, he squeezed my shoulder.

"Staying hydrated will help with that too. And be sure to eat. Nothing too heavy. Okay?"

"Okay," I said, nodding.

He looked at his watch and turned to Lynx. "Sorry to have to run. I'll ring you when I get another break. We'll make plans."

Lynx thanked him, and the two men embraced before Stephen said goodbye to me and left.

"I appreciate you contacting your cousin. As I said, my parents live in Boston. I'll give them a call, and they'll pick me up."

"I'll stay with you until they arrive." He didn't even look up at me. He was studying what looked like my care instructions.

"May I see those?" I snapped—which I seemed to be doing a lot of, but it was *my* damn head injury.

"Of course," he murmured, sheepishly handing them to me.

When I stood and walked out of the clinic, he followed.

"Thank you again," I said once we were outside. "I'll just go to my office and call my mom. Oh, and I'll have Mr. Warrick contact you later about rescheduling. In fact, it might be best for us to wait for Dr. Benjamin to return before continuing. Goodbye." I held out my hand to shake his.

"No."

"Excuse me?" I dropped my arm when he ignored it.

"No, I'm not letting you return to your office alone. No, I'm not going to reschedule with Mr. Warrick. And no, we will not be waiting until Dr. Benjamin returns. As far as you're concerned, I intend to make sure you stick to everything Stephen said."

The arrogant prick… I was getting tired of him railroading me. He didn't even remember fucking me, for God's sake. "Who do you think you are? Nothing about me is your business or your responsibility."

He held up one finger, pulled out his cell, and placed a call. "Meet us," he looked up at the street signs. "At the corner of Congress and Memorial."

"*Hey, wait a minute!* I said I would call my parents."

"I have a driver on standby. It's easier."

I stood with my hands on my hips and stared at him.

"What?"

"I *said* I would call my parents."

"And I *said* I had a driver on standby. I don't understand what the issue is, Emerson."

I dropped my hands and clenched my fists. This was why a person should never accidentally run into their one-night stand. Just because two people had spent time together naked, didn't mean they knew each other. "The *issue* is that you continue to ignore everything I say."

"You're behaving childishly."

I growled. Literally growled. *"Childishly?* In what way?" I hated the way he was looking at me.

"First, with your insistence that a self-applied liquid bandage would be a sufficient way to stop your laceration from bleeding. Then, your refusal to visit an emergency room. And now, with your unwillingness to accept that you cannot be alone when you have a concussion."

"*Might* have a concussion."

"Another example of childishness."

When he reached out for my hand, I yanked it away.

"Emerson," he growled back at me, sounding enough like my father that it freaked me out. "My driver has arrived. Let's go." He put his hand on my elbow.

"I'm not going anywhere with you and especially not in *that* car with *that* driver."

"Why not?"

"Because riding with Mario Andretti made me nauseous before I had a maybe-concussion."

The look on his face softened, and he gazed into my eyes. "I'll advise him to drive more slowly. Now, please, let me take you home."

He was absolutely, insanely, ridiculously handsome, and when he talked to me in his nice tone of voice, I couldn't resist him, just like I hadn't been able to the night I met him in that bar.

4

EMERSON

THREE YEARS AGO

While the rest of the people I knew attending the London conference had gone out for dinner, I was too jet-lagged to join them. What I really wanted was a glass of wine and something to eat. Then, I planned to take a long, hot soak in the claw-foot tub I saw earlier when I dropped my bags in the room. As tempting as it had been then, I had to hurry downstairs to check-in for the morning session that had begun an hour earlier.

"What can I get you?" asked the bartender, who sounded more Australian than British.

"A glass of Shiraz, please."

He winked, opened a bottle, poured a little in a glass, and set it in front of me. "This is one of my favorites," he said, waiting as I swirled and took a sip.

I nodded. "It's very good." He filled my glass with a bigger pour than I expected.

"Enjoy," he said, winking a second time.

As I studied the menu the cute bartender handed me, I heard a man ask if the seat next to me was taken. I turned to respond and found myself staring wide-eyed and open-mouthed speechless. The man was movie-star, leading-man handsome. The lighting in the bar was dim, but I could see enough to turn my brain to mush.

"Will someone be joining you?" he asked with his hand on the seat back of the bar chair.

"I hope you are," I said, finally finding my voice, but blushing when instead of answering with a simple "no," my mouth decided to announce to the world what my brain was thinking.

He smiled, pulled the chair out slightly, and sat. "I'm Lynx," he said, holding out his hand. He looked me up and down without making any attempt to hide he was doing so.

I wiped my sweaty palm on my skirt and took his extended hand. "Emerson," I said, gazing into eyes that looked like they might be green, but it was too dark to know for sure.

"Lynx," said the bartender. "Welcome back, mate. You out on the pull tonight?"

I watched the man sitting next to me as his eyes scrunched and he laughed and shook his head.

"Sorry. Just kidding, you know?"

"What did he say?" I asked when the Aussie left to take another party's order.

"It was crass," my hot bar neighbor said before taking a long sip of the pint the bartender had given him without him needing to order.

I shrugged. "Tell me anyway."

"Essentially, he asked if I was going to get laid tonight."

"Are you?"

"I usually am."

5

LYNX

On our return trip to Boston, Emerson attempted to contact her parents while I pretended to be distracted by something out the window.

I heard the desperation in her voice as she left a message at the end of her calls, and stole a quick glance, afraid she might be close to tears, but instead, she remained steadfastly annoyed by my presence. I rested my hand next to hers, almost close enough to touch.

"If they don't return your call before we reach your building, I'll stay with you until they do."

"I'll be fine," she whispered, studying our hands.

I found myself questioning whether my decision not to divulge that I remembered our night together had been a good one.

I had no choice, though, at least not yet. My reason for being in Boston had less to do with Emerson—the woman I longed to take into my arms and tell how happy I was to see again—than it did with her role at MIT.

Just the idea that Emerson and Dr. Charles were one and the same, had blindsided me. My decision to act as though we hadn't met prior to this morning was off-the-cuff. The longer I continued the charade, the less I saw an outcome in which I could be honest with her. All I knew for certain was I'd vowed that if I ever saw her again, I would do everything I could to get Emerson back in my bed. Now, that was out of the question. I needed her help to find my missing agent as well as a former British diplomat, who had also disappeared.

Dr. Emme Charles appeared on my radar shortly after she'd gone to work for MIT, where her research on Chinese policy and strategy landed her on the watch-list of nearly every international intelligence agency. Why she used Emme professionally rather than Emerson, remained a mystery.

When Saint moved into the apartment down the hall from hers, it wasn't by accident. He'd been tasked, by me, to convert the brilliant Dr. Charles into an MI6 asset. When the CIA got wind of it, they brought Irish in to do the same thing, only instead of him moving into her building, Irish became her research assistant.

Rather than fight over her, I, along with my counterpart at the CIA, agreed there was no reason she couldn't become a shared asset. However, neither Saint nor Irish had been particularly keen on the idea.

While Saint had been the one to facilitate it behind the scenes, I had been the one to arrange the introduction between Dr. Charles and Adam Benjamin, the man she was supposed to meet with this morning. Dr. Benjamin was not only a former British diplomat, but also a world-renowned expert on China and long-time MI6 asset. When he'd learned of the work Emerson was doing, Dr. Benjamin was anxious to reach out, believing that in her, he'd found a comrade in arms.

With him as a policy influencer for the U.K. and her a policy writer for the U.S., they made a formidable team. They were equally impassioned about the threat China posed not just to our two countries, but to the world.

What loomed great in both their minds was the idea that China had become a "systemic rival" to the world's superpowers, one whose economic power and political influence had grown with unprecedented scale and speed. However, Emerson and Dr. Benjamin had their own agendas—even beyond that of their respective countries. Benjamin's, I feared, had resulted in his disappearance and Saint's, since in addition to being responsible for Emerson's recruitment, he was also on Dr. Benjamin's detail.

"Where are you staying?" Emerson asked when the driver pulled up to her building.

"With Niven."

"Is he in town?"

I shook my head.

"I know your friend said I shouldn't be left alone, but I honestly feel fine," she said as we waited for the lift.

"Stephen isn't a friend; he's my cousin. If it weren't imperative you not be left alone, he wouldn't have said it."

"Tommy's—Mr. St. Thomas'—place is just down the hall. I'll walk over if I'm feeling poorly."

“I’m beginning to think you don’t like me,” I said with a wink as we exited the lift and I watched her rummage through her handbag.

“Oh no!” she gasped, leaning into the wall and resting her forehead against it.

“You’re dizzy. Give me your keys.”

“I left my bags in my office. I need to go back.”

“We can discuss that later. For now, give me your keys so I can let you into your apartment.”

“I need my bags,” she said, putting one hand on her hip.

I sighed impatiently. “Very well, what is so important that your bags need to be retrieved today?” I’d been meaning to ask what was in them. The three large canvas bags felt as though they contained bricks.

“Everything.” She lifted her head as though she was about to knock it against the wall and then thought better of it. Instead, she looked up at me. “I don’t have my keys.”

All the better as far as I was concerned. I now had every reason to ignore her pleas to be left on her own.

Saint had had a keypad installed in order to get into his apartment—standard for any MI6 agent whether they were undercover or not—and I had the code. Given the position Emerson held at MIT, I was surprised she hadn’t done the same, or that Saint hadn’t suggested it. I made a mental note to arrange for one of my team to take care of it.

Emerson walked over to the sofa, and I opened the draperies only to close them again when I remembered that Stephen had advised against bright light.

“He was right about the headache,” she mumbled, resting her head against the pillow. I watched as her eyes closed and then opened again, almost in slow motion. “I don’t like to take painkillers.”

I remembered her reaction to Irish’s suggestion she go to an emergency room. The two must somehow relate.

I went into the lavatory and found a bottle of the over-the-counter medicine Stephen mentioned and gave her two tablets along with a glass of water.

“Thank you,” she said, handing the glass back to me.

I took it to the kitchen and then looked inside Saint’s refrigerator and cupboards. Both were empty sans a few bags of tea.

“When did you last eat?”

When she didn’t respond, I walked over to the sofa where she’d stretched out. It appeared she was asleep, but hadn’t Stephen also said that if she lost consciousness, I should take her to the hospital?

“Emerson,” I whispered, sitting beside her on the cushion.

Her eyes opened quickly, but she seemed disoriented. “Lynx?”

“You fell asleep,” I said, brushing her hair from her forehead and pretending I didn’t notice her use of a name that, thus far, she had no reason to know. “Very quickly, I might add. I’m sorry I woke you. I was concerned that you might have lost consciousness.”

“I’m a good sleeper,” she said, averting her eyes.

“I asked when you’d last eaten.”

“I had breakfast.”

I hadn’t, and given it was close to noon, I was famished. I looked out the window and saw a corner market on the other side of Boylston. Dare I leave her long enough to go pick up some groceries?

“Where’s your mobile?”

“Right there,” she said, pointing to the table next to the sofa.

I picked it up, put in my number, and then set it in her hand. “I’m going to run across the way and pick up a few things. Is there anything in particular you’d like?”

She thought for a minute, and I expected her to reiterate that she wasn’t hungry. “A chai latte, please. Tell Rashid it’s for me. He knows how I like it.”

“How do you like it?” I asked, curious as to what options there were.

“Spicy and half-sweet.” She rested her head against the sofa’s cushion and closed her eyes again.

I couldn’t keep myself from running my finger from her temple down her cheek. “Go ahead and sleep,” I said when she opened her eyes and they met mine. “I’ll only be a few minutes, but ring me if you don’t feel well.”

“Okay,” she whispered and turned away from me. I stood, knowing that if I didn’t get out of here, I was going to lift Emerson into my arms and hold her as she slept. Never before had I felt such an overpowering need to take care of someone, and I found it rather disconcerting.

Once downstairs, I sent a text to Stephen, asking if it was normal for her to be so sleepy, and then dashed over to the market.

The man behind the counter ignored me until I asked for the chai. “It’s for Emerson. She likes it spicy—”

“I know how she likes it,” the man with a heavy Middle Eastern accent said as he walked out from behind the counter and toward the rear of the store.

“It needs to be decaffeinated,” I added.

"Yes," he responded without turning around.

A few minutes later, he walked up with a lidded ceramic cup and looked at everything I had on the counter. "You take Emme her chai. I'll ring you up, and you pay when Rashid delivers."

"Are you Rashid?"

The man shook his head and looked at me as if I was daft. "Rashid is my son."

A few minutes after I returned, I realized that I hadn't given the man at the market Saint's apartment number. I was just about to leave to do so when Emerson's mobile rang.

"Hi," she answered. "Yes, I'm at Tommy's." There were a few seconds of silence on her end, but whatever the caller said, made her smile and her cheeks turn pink.

She ended the call and sat up. As soon as she did, she put her face in her hands. I bounded across the room to her. "What's wrong?"

She moved her hands and peered up at me. "I was hoping that when I opened my eyes, my mishap of this morning would've been a weird dream." She ran her hands over her hair. "I must look terrible."

On the contrary, she looked very much like she had the last time I saw her, and that was beautiful.

I'd woken her with my mouth, watching her face as she came awake. I closed my eyes, only momentarily, pushing the memory away before my body reacted in an embarrassing way. "You look lovely," I murmured.

Seconds later, there was a knock at the door. When I opened it, I had an inkling of why she was concerned about her appearance.

Not that I usually took notice of other men, but it was impossible to ignore his attractiveness. He was like a walking sculpture—his facial features and body looked as though they'd been chiseled from stone. His hair was long on top and fell forward, and when he brushed it away and looked at me, I could see gold flecks in his hazel eyes. I felt Emerson's presence behind me.

"Emme," the man said, pushing past me. "What happened?"

I watched her cheeks flame and her eyes drop to the floor in a way that made me want to bend her to my will.

"I hit my head," she said.

"Oh no," *Rashid* responded, putting his arms around her. I hated the way she rested her cheek on his chest and closed her eyes. I might as well have been invisible as far as the two people standing a few feet from me were concerned. When I saw him bring his hand to her hair and stroke it, I was ready to rip his arm off.

"Your father said you'd have a bill," I snapped.

"Yes." He reached into his pocket but left one arm around Emerson.

"Did you bring the groceries?"

"They're in the hall," he responded before leaning forward and kissing *my* Emerson's forehead.

When he released her and walked toward me, I wanted to rush around him and reclaim her as my own. Instead, I pulled my billfold from my trouser pocket and handed him twenty dollars more than the tab came to. "I'll bring them in," I said as I followed him to the door, standing on the threshold so he couldn't step back inside. "Thank you," I managed to grunt at him before closing the door in his face.

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Exploring the Variety of Random Documents with Different Content

we crossed the river for the fifteenth time, making another short march to Brandy Station.

May 3d we marched leisurely to Culpepper (distance six miles), and halted there several hours. Marched all the night following, crossing the Rapidan at Germania Ford at eight o'clock in the morning, where we halted for breakfast. During the day we pushed steadily forward into the Wilderness, marching till dark, when we bivouacked near Wilderness Tavern, in close proximity to the enemy.

May 5th.—Early in the morning we were in line of battle, with orders to fortify our position. We had an abundance of material with which to build breastworks, and axes, spades, and picks were freely used by willing hands. In a few hours we built a formidable line of defense, behind which we expected to fight, but were disappointed (as we had often been before) when the order "forward" was sounded. About noon we advanced, leaving our entrenched position for other troops to occupy. Our division, which had the honor of opening the campaign, moved cautiously forward to attack the enemy. Soon we encountered their skirmishers and drove them back to their lines. As we approached the enemy the Regiment made quick time in crossing a road along which poured a shower of grape and canister. Scarcely had we reached the shelter of the woods on the opposite side of this road when we came under fire of infantry, who gave us a warm reception, but were pushed back before our steady advance to their second line, where we engaged them until dark.

In this our first engagement in the Wilderness campaign our Regiment suffered little, owing to the favorable lay of the ground over which we advanced. We lost none killed, and but thirteen wounded.

That night we lay on our arms. There was, however, but little chance for sleep, as we were in the extreme front, and almost within speaking distance of the enemy. Early the following morning the

fighting was renewed on our right and left, and was then very severe. The rattle of musketry and the roar of artillery, as it reverberated through the forest, was terrific. Although we were under the fire of artillery, with the din of battle thundering in our ears, many of us slept, unable longer to resist nature's demand for repose.

A pine tree standing just in the rear of our line of battle was severed about midway by a cannon ball, and the top fell to the ground and stood there erect beside the trunk.

Towards midnight we were suddenly withdrawn, and after marching (or rather stumbling) through the woods in the darkness for about a mile, we halted near where we were on the morning of the 5th. There we laid down our arms and unconditionally surrendered to an overwhelming force—"nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

As it was quite dark when we arrived, we did not know that a twelve-pound battery was in position behind us and only a few rods distant, until about daylight, when it opened fire and brought us to our feet in quick time. The occasion was quickly ascertained. The enemy had assumed the offensive, and was advancing in force against our works. They were handsomely repulsed, however, and with this exception we were not disturbed that day. Several times the enemy shelled us, but being protected by breastworks, we suffered no loss. The line behind us was less fortunate, several shells exploding there, killing and wounding a number of men. Thus we passed the third day of the battle of the Wilderness.

At night the location of both armies was plainly indicated by blazing camp-fires, as well as by the cheers of the *Yanks* and the yells of the *Rebs*—demonstrations that were intended by each to blind the other in regard to their contemplated movements.

About nine o'clock we began our first flank movement towards Richmond. Neither tongue nor pen would do justice to our

experience of night marches such as this. All night we marched and halted (but halted more than we marched). We did not often stop to rest, but jogged along at a snail-like pace. When our column moved we marched route step, arms at will, and when it halted we came to order arms and leaned upon our guns, keeping our places in the ranks, so as to be on the alert to prevent a surprise, ready for any emergency.

About midnight we had just emerged from the woods and, halting in the road, stood leaning on our guns. It has been said that soldiers can sleep while marching. Whether this be so or not, it is certain that at this time three quarters of the men were three quarters asleep, and the other quarter more so, as we waited there for the column to start.

At this moment the troops ahead came suddenly to the front to meet, as they supposed, an attack of the enemy in ambush, which proved to be only a squad of stragglers who had stolen away into the bushes by the roadside, and turned in for a good night's rest, but had been awakened at our approach. The sudden alarm created a panic which ran like an electric flash through the entire column, sweeping the soldiers from the road as quickly and effectually as though a battalion of cavalry had charged upon us unawares. Lieutenant-Colonel Stephenson was on his horse, but availed himself of the momentary halt to drop off into a gentle slumber. Suddenly he was awakened to find his horse whirling around and himself apparently alone.

Our double-quick movement in the dark from the road to cover effectually awakened us, and we resumed our places in line, to laugh over our experience and continue our tramp till daylight, when we halted near Spottsylvania. One would suppose that we needed rest and sleep by that time, but instead of that our Regiment was ordered to support a battery, and we remained during the day (Sunday), spending most of the time fortifying the position. There was considerable fighting during the day, and at its close we moved

to a new line of battle, which we occupied during the 9th, 10th, and 11th of May. This was within easy rifle range from the enemy, and being able only partially to protect ourselves behind the breastworks, several casualties occurred in the Regiment.

Sergeant Spalding was hit in the neck by a spent ball, which he carefully saved. A man by his side was struck in the forehead by a bullet which knocked off his hat, made an ugly scalp wound, and finally left him stunned and bleeding; the first symptoms of his revival were a hand outstretched and a "Good-bye, boys," to those around him; but he soon recovered enough to go to the rear for repairs.

On the morning of the 11th, General Grant sent to Washington that memorable dispatch which was characteristic of our leader and meant success, although at a terrible sacrifice of life, limb and treasure: "We have ended the sixth day of heavy fighting, and expect to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer."

Captain Dana had been on detached service, acting as aide-de-camp to General Dana, who was in command somewhere out West. Having obtained a leave of absence of sixty days he returned to the Regiment, which he joined here in the Wilderness, and resumed command of his company. Early in the campaign he "captured" a wooden chair from some house as we passed, which he persistently carried wherever he went. At every halt the captain brought his chair to the ground and sat himself down in it comfortably and complacently. In every fight his "private chair," as he called it, shared his dangers and rode upon his shoulder. In one of our scrimmages a rifle shot struck the chair, and the captain returned, among his casualties that day as wounded, "Private Chair in the leg—badly."

The 12th of May, 1864, is a date never to be forgotten by any of the 32d who were present in the attack on Laurel Hill that day. Brief as was the action, the loss of the Regiment in proportion to the numbers engaged, was greater than in any battle of the war.

That morning found us where we had been for two or three days, in front of Laurel Hill, and distant hardly more than a quarter of a mile from the works of the enemy. Between us and them were two swells of land, which afforded us some protection from the enemy's missiles. The summit of one of these was occupied by our pickets, and the other by the pickets of the rebels.

About nine o'clock A. M. we received orders to attack the position of the enemy on Laurel Hill, and the brigade, commanded by Colonel Prescott, advanced with a rush across the intervening space.

As the line of battle started, it overran the picket line—dashed down the little depression in their front, over the next rise of ground, but at the foot of Laurel Hill the men, whose momentum had carried them thus far, faltered under the terrible fire, and laid down within a short distance of the enemy's line of works. Here the ground did not cover the left of the Regiment, and while Colonel Stephenson was trying to draw his left under shelter, he saw that the regiment on his right had broken and was falling back in great disorder, and at once ordered the men to save themselves.

The advance had been disastrous, but as usual the retreat was far more so. In the 32d five bearers fell before the colors reached the old position behind our works; of the 190 men who advanced in the regimental line, 103 were killed or wounded, and from the time that they left the works until the remnant had returned, less than thirty minutes had elapsed. Among our wounded were Lieutenants Lauriat, Hudson, and Farnsworth, Adjutant Kingsbury, and Captains Bancroft and Hamilton; the latter of whom died two months later of his wounds.

From that day until the 23d, the Regiment was almost constantly in position in front of the enemy at Spottsylvania Court House and other localities, the service varied by repeated change of location all in the direction of the left, the building of new breastworks, picket duty, etc.

At the commencement of the war, the shovel was derided by a considerable portion of the people of the North, and even by the inexperienced and over-reckless men in the army, but the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac learned from experience the value and advantage of the utensil. After long and weary marches, the tired soldiers, if placed in positions confronting the enemy, would almost invariably, and often without orders, throw up earthworks before they wrapped themselves in their blankets for sleep.

On the morning of the 23d we resumed our march in the direction of the North Anna River, Crawford's division of our corps, which was composed almost entirely of Pennsylvania troops, taking the advance.

Our destination was Jericho Ford on the North Anna. When within a mile or two of the ford, at a fork in the road, General Crawford by mistake took the wrong way, and had advanced some distance in that direction before his error was discovered. Without waiting for that division to countermarch, General Warren, our corps commander, directed General Griffin with his division to cross the ford. Our brigade took the advance and forded the stream, which was about four feet deep. Reforming at once upon a plain, the brigade advanced in line of battle into a piece of woods, preceded by the 22d Massachusetts as skirmishers, under the command of Major Burt, one of the most skilful officers in command of a skirmish line in the army. We had barely entered the woods when our skirmishers drew the fire from the enemy's picket line, and the bullets came whistling over our heads quite freely.

The enemy soon fell back, and after gaining some ground we were directed to fell trees and erect another line of works. The men worked with great zeal, but had not finished when the enemy came upon us in full force, General Hill's corps essaying to drive us from our position into the river. The attack fell upon our division, which received the impetuous charge with a steady fire, and the enemy retired. Yet, notwithstanding the merciless reception which was

given them, the Confederates pushed forward again about 5 P. M., and finally the line of the 9th Massachusetts broke under the pressure, rendering our position critical. The enemy poured through the interval, thus endangering our whole line; but their headlong course was checked by a well-directed fire from a battery hastily placed in position, and served under the eye of General Warren.

Unable to sustain this raking fire of canister, the Confederates gave way, and our line was reformed and strengthened. During this time the 32d, which formed the left flank of our battle line, maintained a continuous fire, the men loading and discharging their rifles with great rapidity. It is impossible to tell how long this action was in progress, as in the excitement of battle one can make but little note of the passage of time, but after a sharp, quick struggle, which seemed to last but a few minutes, and yet probably consumed more than an hour's time, the enemy withdrew, baffled in his attempt to force our position.

If such a thing could well be, this was the most enjoyable fight in which we participated during the pounding process we were obliged to undergo from the Wilderness to Petersburg. It was the only engagement in which we had the advantage of remaining under the cover of our works and receiving the attack of the enemy. In every other action during this campaign these conditions were reversed, and our comparatively trifling loss demonstrated the disadvantage under which we had habitually been placed.

This engagement proved that the enemy was on our front in force, that he had again divined his adversary's plan of flanking his army, and that any further advance in this direction must be gained by hard fighting. We remained in our position during the night, receiving no further annoyance from the enemy. The next day we were moved to the right, and on the 25th again moved a short distance in the direction of Hanover Junction, where we threw up works and did picket duty until nightfall of the 26th, when we received orders to retire, which we did silently, leaving our pickets to

face the enemy until the army had recrossed the North Anna. Our division crossed at Quarles' Ford, and marched all night and the next day in the direction of the Pamunkey River.

After leaving the North Anna our next encounter with the enemy was in the vicinity of Mechanicsville. On the morning of the 30th our brigade advanced in line of battle through the Tolopotomy Swamp, driving the enemy's skirmish line, which made but little resistance, until we came to open fields around Shady Grove Church, where we found him in force, protected by earthworks. This advance through the woods was very toilsome; briars, fallen trees, and similar obstructions impeding our progress, made it difficult to preserve the line of battle. Many of the men were badly shod; some had no covering for the feet, yet were compelled to march over briars and stumps which abounded.

The men had started on the campaign well provided with shoes—not new, perhaps, but in good condition—and twenty-five days' constant service, in rain and sun, dust and mud, had left them in a pitiable condition. Yet there was no help for it, no supplies upon which to draw, for it was the 6th of June before we saw our baggage and supply trains. During this period of thirty days, neither men nor officers could obtain any change of clothing; the best that could be done was to catch a few hours, while at rest, for washing, wait for the sun to do the drying, and meantime go without.

During the afternoon there was considerable desultory firing, and our loss for the day amounted to twenty-one killed or wounded, among them Lieutenant George W. Bibby, killed.

About midnight we were relieved by a brigade of the 9th Corps, and went into camp. June 1st and 2d we were in the reserve, but on the 3d were aroused before daybreak to take part in the battle of Cold Harbor.

Our part consisted of a charge across an open field under a severe fire of grape and canister. We drove the enemy out of one line of earthworks and into another, where he made a stand. The real battle of Cold Harbor, probably, did not occupy more than twenty minutes. It was the same along the whole line as with us—a rapid charge under a galling fire from the enemy, who, protected by earthworks of great strength, easily repelled our attacks. Our brigade was, perhaps, as successful as any, for we did drive the enemy from his most advanced position, but he retired to one of greater strength. This attack was made before five o'clock in the morning. During the remainder of the day we laid quiet, within the redoubt we had captured, the enemy occupying his interior line not more than two hundred yards away. We kept up a constant fire, watching for every man who had the courage to show himself, thus hindering as far as was possible the working of the Confederate guns. The defences on our front were well constructed, and evidently laid out under the supervision of an experienced engineer. Indeed we learned from a prisoner that they were begun two weeks before we reached the place, by order of General Lee, who, it appears, foresaw that General Grant would necessarily be brought to this point if he continued "to fight it out on that line."

Between the lines of works occupied by our brigade and the enemy, the ground was covered with pine-trees felled and slashed across each other, making the passage through exceedingly difficult for troops, even had they been unopposed. But, in addition, the enemy had posted a battery in such a position that he could sweep the field with the fire of his guns, from which there was no shelter.

In view of all this we were not much elated when we received an order that at six o'clock P. M. we were to attack the enemy in our front, without regard to the movements of the troops on either flank. Lieutenant-Colonel Stephenson, believing that, under the circumstances, the movement could not be successful, sent to General Griffin, the division commander, a description and sketch of the position of the enemy and the ground before us, whereupon the

order was so changed that we were not to advance until the 9th Corps, which joined our right, should move. It can be imagined how anxiously we watched the movements of the 9th, but the hour came, and the artillery signal for the charge was unnoticed by the troops on our right, who did not budge, and we were glad indeed when darkness came on and we knew that we had, at least for the time, escaped the terrible ordeal we had expected. We know now that the order to charge was given to the commanders of every corps, but was disregarded by every one; feeling that, after the experiences of the morning, another charge would result in fearful loss of life, with no effect upon the enemy's position. Our loss during the day was ten killed and twenty-one wounded. The loss to the Union army was over thirteen thousand killed and wounded; that of the Confederates, less than one thousand.

For a few days after the battle of Cold Harbor there seemed to be an intention on the part of General Grant to commence siege operations. We were then about twelve miles from Richmond, and on the same ground where, nearly two years before, was fought the action of Gaines' Mill—the first of McClellan's seven days' battle in 1862. The prospect of another campaign in the swamps of the Chickahominy was not attractive, and no regrets were expressed when on the 12th of June, General Grant abandoned his attempt to attack Richmond directly, and headed his columns for the James River.

To cover this change of plan, the 5th Corps crossed the Chickahominy at Long Bridge, and threatened to force a passage through White Oak Swamp, but as soon as the rest of the army had crossed the James, we took up our march southward, and followed to a point a little below Wilcox Landing, where we were ferried over the river, and on the 16th the whole army was on the right bank preparing for a new campaign.

XVIII.
THE BOMB PROOFS.

AFTER the long marches of the spring campaign of 1864, through the Wilderness to Spottsylvania Court House, across the North Anna, through the Tolopotomy Swamp to Bethesda Church, thence *via* the Chickahominy, White Oak Swamp, and Charles City Court House to the James River, the 32d Regiment crossed the James and marched to a point on the Norfolk Railroad, about three miles from Petersburg, where, on the 18th of June, they took part in the charge which drove the enemy into their last line of intrenchments. It was in this action that Colonel George L. Prescott fell, mortally wounded. While the engagement was not an entire success, it gave us the vantage ground of the crest of a hill, which we retained, and whereon we established our line of entrenchments; and this was the position from which the Burnside mine was afterwards made and exploded. After this line was established, our Brigade was ordered to the rear, into camp along the Jerusalem plank road, where we were held as reserves for special duty; and this was not, as might be supposed, light duty, for while there we were busy day and night, building a large earthwork fort, which was named Fort Prescott in honor of our colonel. Here Lieutenant-Colonel Stephenson, suffering from his wounds, resigned and left us, to return to civil life, and Major Edmunds was appointed Colonel, Captain Cunningham, Lieutenant-Colonel, and Captain Shepard, Major.

On the 12th of July, after being in reserve somewhat over three weeks, during which we had been called upon twice to reinforce the 2d and 6th Corps lines, we were ordered into the trenches, and began our life in the bomb proofs. Our first term of service there

extended from July 12th to August 16th, a continuous period of five weeks, and must have been experienced to be fully realized.

In order to give the reader an idea of what a bomb proof is, we will describe the method of its construction. First, a hole is dug in the ground, which, of necessity, when in front of an active enemy, must be done under cover of darkness; this hole is perhaps four or five feet deep, providing the ground is not too wet; then the top is roofed over with logs of wood held up by cross timbers; then the earth which has been dug out is thrown over the logs, which makes the whole comparatively water-tight and proof against solid shot or shells, such as the enemy seemed to delight in tossing over into our lines in season and out of season, giving us frequent surprises and placing some of us *hors du combat*. There were, of course, openings to these subterranean caverns so that those who were to occupy them could crawl in and out. The openings were usually not much larger than was needed for a man comfortably to get in and out, and had an adjustable log to cover the major portion of the aperture, so arranged that it could be moved on and off at pleasure. This entrance was left on the side opposite the enemy, so that direct shots could not penetrate it, the only danger on that side being from shells exploded among the bomb proofs casting their fragments through the doorways into our underground domiciles. This would, after all, occasionally occur, sometimes arousing a sleeping soldier with a summons to another world. If one could choose the ground where he would locate such an underground mansion, he might make it a dry and comfortable abode, and one that would be comparatively healthy; but the ground assigned to the 32d was a clay soil, rather springy, where in many places two feet of excavation brought us to water, therefore a part of the domicile had to be above ground; and this was protected by inclined timbers, built like a lean-to, with a palisade front to make it proof against the ordinary shot and shell.

There were many exciting scenes and occurrences among the bomb proofs. Occasionally, in the middle of the night, a solid shot or a shell

would come singing through the air and pounce down on one of the huts where half-a-dozen soldiers were dozing away, and the shock would startle them so that for a short time they would hardly know whether it was an earthquake or an attack by the enemy, but finding that the roof had not fallen in, and seeing no danger at hand, they would usually turn over and resume their slumbers.

Within these huts we were obliged to pass our time when off duty and, as would be naturally expected, they proved a fruitful source of sickness.

Many of our men, delirious with malarial fever, were sent from the bomb proofs to the hospital, where they were dosed, first with a medicine composed largely of spirits of turpentine, next with strong acids, and then with quinine and spirituous liquors. If there is anything that will take the conceit out of a man in a short space of time, it is this malarial fever when it gets a good hold. It is wonderfully tenacious in its grip when once it does get hold, leaving the strong man when it must, but never leaving the weak man while the breath of life remains in him.

On Saturday the 30th of July, the Burnside mine as it was called, was exploded, but the result was hardly what had been hoped and expected. There was indeed a great panic among the enemy, but the advance obtained for our lines was inconsiderable, and the fear of similar incidents was not confined to the rebel troops. Men thought and some spoke of possible counter-mines, and to the dangers of war which had become in some degree familiar, there was now added another and an unpleasant possibility—of an irresistible explosion from beneath; one which bayonets could not repel, and from which our bomb proofs could afford no protection. Confined to unhealthy caves when not exposed to more palpable dangers, deprived of opportunity for wholesome exercise and limited by the circumstances in the range of our diet, wearied by excitement and worn down by constant new alarms, it is no wonder that our numbers decreased nor that men were despondent.

Scarcely a day passed that some were not killed or wounded, and sickness was more effective than gunpowder in sending men to the rear or putting them out of the fight.

Our second tour of duty in the trenches was from the 1st to the 3d of September,—but it was in a drier place, and we suffered comparatively little.

Five weeks in the bomb proofs depleted the Regiment as much as any whole campaign in the field had done before, and it was with glad hearts that we received the order to give place to a relieving force.

Surgeon Faxon of the 32d was placed in command of the hospital of the 5th corps, near City Point, and when the army had settled down to the siege of Petersburg, Mrs. Faxon was ordered to the front, and a description of the hospital and of hospital life from her point of view will not be uninteresting.

XIX.
OUR CORPS HOSPITAL.

IT was a bright, warm, September afternoon in 1864, when the hospital transport, on which I was a passenger, loosed from the Seventh street landing in Washington and steamed away down the Potomac and out into Chesapeake Bay. So long as daylight lasted there were many objects of interest to occupy my eyes and thoughts, and when night closed in, finding that sleep would be an impossibility in the stifling heat of a state-room, I willingly resigned myself to the idea of passing the night on deck, for the sky was cloudless, and the full moon shone on the wide expanse of quiet waters.

The next afternoon we were steaming up the James River, under wooded banks, by neglected fields, past deserted plantations. Here and there might be seen some great homestead such as Carter's, which had escaped destruction, standing patriarchally among its negro quarters and numerous outbuildings, but even these few were evidently deserted and desolate.

About sunset, having passed Harrison's Landing, we seemed to be approaching some great mart of trade, so varied and bustling was the scene which presented itself to us. Beyond the masts and rigging, and the smoke stacks and steam of the water craft, were seen groups of tents, long ranges of whitewashed barracks, log-huts and shanties of every shape bearing the signs of sutlers and licensed traders. Among these were moving uniformed soldiers and officers, on foot and mounted, negroes driving mule teams, negroes leading mules or driving ambulances drawn by mules, sentries on duty and detachments relieving guard, and over all flags flying gaily. This was

City Point, and such the busy bustling life of the place which was the base of supplies for the army.

Landing at a wooden pier, I and my luggage were loaded into an ambulance. Driving past General Grant's attractive quarters, by what must have been pleasant homes, now occupied for army purposes, through what had been avenues of noble trees, which were now rows of stumps, two miles over a rough road brought me to the depot hospital of the 5th corps.

A broad drive-way led to the headquarters' tents, in front of which a sentinel was on duty. Three hospital tents, each 15x17 feet, were arranged, opening into each other, and furnished as office, parlor, and bedroom. In front was an arbor-like enclosure made of green reversible blinds—probably borrowed from some "mansion"—which gave to one inside an agreeable seclusion. The furniture consisting of sofa, chairs, tables, mantel, hanging shelves, bureau, wardrobe, and washstand, was made of soft, unpainted, unvarnished pine of rude construction. Cushions were made of army blankets, and the bed, with its linen counterpane and sheets looked tempting. The tents were floored and in each was an open fire-place with broad hearth-stone, which I hope did not come from the cemetery near by.

Dinner, an elaborate meal of several courses, was speedily served in a neighboring tent, and bore witness to what might be accomplished by culinary skill, combined with a few pans and a stove, in a space four feet square. We were hardly seated when, at what proved to be its accustomed hour, a band commenced to discourse a programme of excellent music. Thus cheerfully my life on the Appomattox began.

The broad drive by which I had entered the camp was the street upon which were quartered all the officers, the assistant surgeons occupying tents on the same line with ours and on each side.

At right angles to this were streets formed by the tents of the patients, nurses, and servants. The central street, directly opposite the headquarters, was wider than the others, and in the middle of it was the dispensary. Three tents, 15x17 each, opening one into another, extended from street to street. In each tent were six beds, by each of which a little table held basin and towel. Along the front of the tents were plank walks, and above on a framework of posts and rails were spread branches of trees to furnish shelter from the sun. Across the farther end of the streets were the mess tents, seven in number, supplied with tables, etc., for the meals of the convalescents. Beyond them was the diet kitchen, five tents, and behind them the quarters of the cooks. On one border of the hospital camp were the tents for the nurses (soldiers) and for the Sanitary Commission, and at the opposite extremity, under a group of persimmon trees, were accommodations for the military guard of one hundred men. In one corner was the property room—a log-house in which, carefully arranged, labelled, and registered, were the effects of those who died, and on the outer limit were the negro quarters, stables, etc.

In the rear of our street and parallel to it was another, through which a railroad track was laid, and there, after a battle, I have seen many car-loads of wounded men brought in, lying on the floors of rough cars, into which they had been loaded from the field of action. All grimy with the heat, dust and wounds of battle, they were placed upon stretchers, and by the convalescents and nurses were carried to the dainty beds. They were first washed and put to bed, then supplied with food and drink, then visited by the surgeons, assistants, and nurses.

The arrangements for cooking were, of course, upon a very large scale. Huge coppers were used for boiling, and brick ovens for baking. In one of the latter three barrels of beans could be cooked for the Sunday dinner.

A little Scotch woman, Miss Duncan, was in charge of this diet kitchen, having a number of men under her direction; no time was frittered away, a perfect system was maintained, and the men submitted meekly to her despotic sway. I have seen a six-foot man rush for sand and mop, to erase an accidental spot of grease before it should be discovered by her sharp eyes. Everything under her *régime* was a miracle of neatness and economy. The pans were kept shining and arranged in regular order on the shelves, and the store-room was dazzlingly neat. The smallest number of rations issued from her kitchen was 5,000 per diem, and she has sent out as many as 15,000 in one day. Nothing was wasted; the surgeon was bright enough to secure beef of the best quality, and even hoofs and tails supplied fine jelly and excellent soups, and what could not be used directly was sent to feed the swine at the piggery.

The negro camp was filled with families of contrabands who had found their way within our lines. These were served with rations, and drawn upon for such assistance as they were competent to give. The women washed for the hospital, and the men did all sorts of rough work. Sleeping from ten to thirty in one tent, they lived by day out of doors, and negroes of all ages and all colors basked in the sun or hugged the fires, or rolled about in the dirt. Many of the children came in with only one article of clothing, and that very commonly was a coffee bag with a hole for the head to go through. One old woman said that she came in because she had heard that "the champagne was a-goan to open." Rough as they fared to our eyes, it was evident they had never lived in such sybaritic luxury before.

Every part of the extensive camp was swept daily; neatness was the order everywhere. The precision and beauty of the routine, and the exactness which followed discipline, spoiled me for civil life at home afterward, for I craved that system, punctuality, and order which cannot be found except under military rule.

Passing down the walks in front of the patients' tents, their thin white faces claimed one's pity, but there was comfort in seeing here,

within hearing of the droning voice of the cannon and the tearing sound of musketry, that the victims of the battle found a quiet place to rest, where, lying in the soft air and bounteous sunlight, carefully nursed and daintily fed, their wounds might be healed and their ills abated before they were again to be plunged into the chaos of war.

In the winter many of the tents were replaced by log houses, and some of these became charming cottages, having many conveniences. Around my house was a little garden with a tiny fence, and oats were sown in the beds to form ornamented borders, in which all the corps badges were represented.

But with the spring all this was to disappear; the army moving forward to final victory, and the *impedimenta* like myself, going back to civil or civilized tameness in the cold North. But even now I have but to shut my eyes as my neighbor, the old army bugler, practices the calls in the clear winter air, and again returns the memory of those days.

XX.
ABOUT PETERSBURG.

SUCH portions of the army as were not stationed in the trenches were called upon frequently to repel attacks, and occasionally were sent out on expeditions to destroy railroads, or otherwise to interfere with the enemy's supplies, and to weaken his lines. One of these was the action on the Weldon railroad, August 18th, in which we lost thirteen men. Another led to the battle of Peeble's Farm, September 30th, 1864.

The expeditionary force was composed of the 5th and 9th Corps, and the movement was as usual off to the left. After marching three miles our brigade was in front of Fort McRee, and the men were ordered to lie down in the edge of a piece of woods until the remainder of the attacking force could be posted. The 32d Massachusetts was directly in front of the fort, the 4th Michigan on the right, and on the left a brigade of new troops, which however took no part in the attack.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when the order for the advance was given, and we moved out into an open field, finding ourselves, perhaps half a mile distant from the fort and the line of the breastworks of the enemy. Their batteries opened upon us promptly, but old soldiers know that it is not the great guns that are most to be feared, and our line moved steadily on until it came within rifle range of the rebel works and the small arms began their deadly work; then the order for double quick was given and the men, sure that the faster they moved the less was their risk, dashed forward with alacrity and in a few moments closed upon the lines of the enemy. Colonel Edmands in this charge was disabled by a wound

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